4.4.4. Principles and Operation of Trophy Hunting (Brian M. Jeffery)

Trophy hunting is defined as hunting by a paying client (usually accompanied by a professional guide) with the objective of harvesting individual animals with best physical attributes (e.g., body size, antler points, tasks, rarity, etc.). Trophy hunting has been used for a number of big game animals, including crocodilians and usually exerts selective pressure on adult males. The ventures are usually hunting operators who market and sell hunts on owned or leased hunting areas with essential staff (professional hunters/trackers, drivers, skinners/butchers and camp staff). In several African countries, the hunting industries and government agencies united to create programs that incentivize trophy hunting to contribute to conservation. In addition, the lease agreements usually require assistance with anti-poaching policies.

Where well managed, trophy hunting involves low takes and is sustainable. Trophy hunters pay a higher fee per client than conventional tourists and revenue can be generated from lower volumes of people. With low takes and high fees, trophy hunting can play a role in conservation of threatened and endangered species. Trophy hunting can be a viable alternative to areas where conventional tourism is low. In addition, as trophy hunting is primarily motivated by the thrill of the hunt and the subsequent acquisition of a trophy, it can be carved out on land that is less scenic than that demanded for wildlife tourism. These areas may lack the infrastructure, attractive scenery, or high densities of viewable wildlife that conventional tourists come to expect. Trophy hunting revenues are vital to these areas as conventional tourism or ecotourism do not generate enough income for protection and may be more resilient than tourism in politically unstable countries.

Trophy Hunting Review

Trophy hunting takes place in North America, Europe, and in developing countries where wildlife management infrastructure is often less fully developed (IUCN-SCC 2012). It is a form of wildlife use, when managed, may assist in promoting conservation objectives by creating revenue and economic incentives for the management and conservation of targeted species and habitat (IUCN-SCC 2012). If managed poorly, it can fail to deliver these benefits. Hunts are usually conducted by a person paying a considerable amount of money for the opportunity (Lindsey et al. 2007). It typically involves taking small numbers of individuals and does not require development of an infrastructure. It is a high value, low impact type of tourism. A wide variety of species (some of which are both common and secure) are hunted for trophies. Species that are rare or threatened may be included in trophy hunting as part of site-specific conservation strategies (IUCN-SCC 2012).

The IUCN-SSC believes trophy hunting will likely contribute to conservation and to the equitable sharing of benefits of use from natural resources when programs incorporate the following five components (IUCN-SCC 2012):

1. **Biological Sustainability**-Does not contribute to long-term population declines of the hunted species or of other species sharing its habitat. Does not substantially alter processes of natural selection and ecosystem function and maintain wild populations of indigenous species with adaptive gene pools. Does not inadvertently facilitate poaching or illegal trade of wildlife. Does not substantially manipulate the ecosystem in ways that are incompatible with supporting a full range of native biodiversity.

2. **Net Conservation Benefit**-It is linked to identifiable parcels of land where habitat for wildlife is a priority. Produces income, employment, and/or other benefits that generate incentives for reduction in pressures on populations of target species. It is part of a legally recognized governance system that supports conservation and has a system of implementation and enforcement.

3. **Socio-Economic-Cultural Benefit**-Respects local cultural values and practices, and is accepted by most members of the local community on whose land it occurs. Involves and benefits local residents in an equitable manner. Business practices that promote long-term economic sustainability.
4. **Adaptive Management: Planning, Monitoring, and Reporting**—Specific quotas and hunting plans are established through a collaborative process (involvement from local communities) and hunting indices (i.e., trophy size, animal age, hunting success rates, etc.) are well documented. Involves adaptive management of hunting quotas and plans. Laws, regulations, and quotas are transparent and clear. Produces reliable and periodic documentation of its sustainability and conservation benefits.

5. **Accountable and Effective Governance**—It is subject to a governance structure that clearly allocates management responsibilities. Accounts for revenues in a transparent manner and distributes net revenues to conservation and community. Takes all necessary steps to eliminate corruption. Ensures compliance with all relevant national and international requirements and regulations.

While trophy hunting is a useful tool in conservation, there are factors limiting the success of the program. These include ethical, biological, and social (Lindsey et al. 2007). In some African countries, game ranchers are required by law to have perimeter game fencing. Many of these areas are small and overstocked (Lindsey et al. 2007). Exotic species are often introduced onto game ranches to increase the diversity of saleable trophies (Hamman et al. 2003; Lindsey 2005). In some cases, species are hybridized to offer unique trophy prize (Hamman et al. 2003). If these exotic and hybridized species escape to the wild, it could cause ecological problems.

Some ethical issues have been raised and have a negative impact on public perception of trophy hunting. Activities such as shooting from vehicles, shooting females or immature individuals, luring animals from parks, using bait stations, hunting with dogs, put and take (releasing trophy animals immediately before a hunt), and canned hunt (shooting animals in small enclosures with no chance to escape) are under scrutiny by activist groups.

In some countries, there are not enough resources to adequately census wildlife populations and quotas are based on guesswork (Caro et al. 1998). The valuation of wildlife as trophies creates pressure to issue large quotas (Lindsey et al. 2006). Moreover, many regions lack the resources to enforce existing quotas.

Trophy hunting can be a lucrative business while helping to conserve wildlife and its habitat if managed properly. It incentivizes the protection of habitat and maintenance of sustainable populations in areas where there is no conservation alternative. However, poor governance, corruption, and unethical/unsustainable practices persistently weaken its success as a conservation tool.

**Crocodilian examples of trophy hunts**

Nile Crocodiles are hunted with guides in Tanzania, South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, and Namibia on private reserves or concession areas. The crocodiles are hunted mostly with rifles with a minimum .300 caliber round and in blinds. Shots are only fired at individuals on dry land.

American Alligators are hunted with guides in the United States in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas on public and private lands. Methods of take vary among states. The most common methods used are harpoon, bow and arrow, bailed lines, and crossbows.

**References**


IUCN SSC (2012). IUCN SSC Guiding principles on trophy hunting as a tool for creating conservation incentives. Version 1.0. IUCN: Gland. [Download](#).